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17 November 1953

PROCUREMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ON

FOREIGN LANGUAGE PUBLICATIONS

Report of the Working Group on Centralization of Records
Concerning IAC Receipts of Soviet Bloc Serial Publications and
Coordination of Requirements for Serial Publications.


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I. The Problem

To study the needs among intelligence agencies for a central record of orders for and receipts of foreign language publications.

II. Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, foreign language publications may be defined as any and all overtly published and collectable serials (newspapers and periodicals, of both regular and irregular issuance), books and monographs, bulletins, handbills, catalogs, ephemera, etc., in printed and/or handwritten form.

A central record of orders may be better expressed as the coordination of requirements for the acquisition, procurement or collection of foreign language publications. Such coordination, to be effective, should be based upon those specific missions or functions of each agency as outlined by the National Security Council. In this study it will be referred to as Acquisition Phase.

A central record of receipts implies the knowledgeable and correct reporting of what is acquired in the form of foreign language publications, in order that there may be a free exchange of information on their availability and a consequent validity given to the preparation of requirements for procurement. The Reporting Phase in this paper will attempt to outline this need.

Although not within the purview of this study, it might be borne in mind that the exploitation and reference aspects of foreign language

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publications are of necessity prime factors in the success or failure of any procurement or collection activity. Lastly, it should be understood that the coordination of orders and receipts as stated above does not infer necessarily the physical handling of foreign language publications by a central repository but does suggest that information pertaining thereto be centralized.

III. Discussion

A. Acquisition Phase

The value of the printed word to intelligence cannot be overestimated when one considers that the press is the only overt mass medium permanently recording the events, progress and current philosophy of a nation. It therefore follows that the timely acquisition, receipt and dissemination of those publications possessing an intelligence potential should be the major goals of this undertaking.

Provided that certain support now proposed is effected, it is believed that the present procurement facilities of the IAC Agencies, i.e., regular and ad-hoc publications procurement officers of the Foreign Service, attaches of Defense agencies, etc., are capable of performing a successful acquisition program. It is further believed, however, that their success depends directly upon the coordination of requirements served upon them for collection.

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Because of a lack of knowledge of what is in the collections of intelligence and even non-intelligence agencies, of what is currently being received, or of what is currently being published, requirements are usually general rather than specific ("all publications in the field of geophysics"). It is too often the case of requirements for foreign language publications being based upon what is known, or thought to be known, at a given time, upon what is demanded by requestors, rather than upon what ought to be required, and this can only be ascertained on an inter-agency basis. Duplication of effort in the procurement field is high; although a certain percentage is necessary and even desirable, it does interfere with any serious attempts at guidance and jeopardizes the validity that intelligence procurement should possess. The old saw "too many cooks spoil the broth" has direct application here.

It must follow that intelligence agencies need to know the publishing activity or potential of a given foreign country. In general, the State PPO's have done and continue to perform a good job in providing Washington with lists of publications available, dealers, book agents, etc. It is desirable to extend this approach to the availability of military, naval and air publications, many of which are restricted to the defense group. The lack or belatedness of national bibliographies adds to the difficulty of knowing what to

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purchase. Foreign book dealers, like their American counterparts, are acquainted with or handle but a fraction of their countries' publications. In the Soviet Orbit, acquisition of publications through book dealers has become practically impossible. The need for the IAC Agencies to develop mutually what correspond to national bibliographies is constantly increasing.

The coordination of requirements, based on mutual knowledge of what the gaps are in intelligence collections, should logically lead to selective acquisition. It is only too apparent that there are more foreign language publications available than there are personnel or machinery to process them. Without a central effort to acquire and distribute pertinent materials, publications containing information of particular interest to a component of intelligence may never come into its possession.

It is then admissible that the two major drawbacks to an effective procurement program today are 1) the failure to use information on sources already at hand (i.e., refining of requirements based on intelligence agency collections), and 2) the lack of comprehensive inventories of sources (i.e., the preparation of "IAC Agency national bibliographies", for want of a better term).

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B. Reporting Phase

The manner of reporting on the receipt of foreign language publications is as varied as it is complex. It is not too drastic to assert that at present much of our acquisition or collection difficulty is due to an inability to identify correctly and adequately such receipts and to issue such information on a regular basis.

Reporting of receipts should be standardized. The title of a publication should be referred to in the vernacular and, where applicable, in a standard form of transliteration. An example of confusion was seen recently in a monographic title reported as "Concentrated Stresses About Holes"...a later inspection of the book revealed that it's title should have been translated "Concentration of Strain near Outlets". Since there are generally numerous "correct" translations or, rather, interpretations of translations, it is necessary to demand transliteration together with translation to permit proper identification. This is a problem both in the field and among departmental components.

The need for a central record of receipts is especially pressing with regard to publications from the critical areas of the Soviet Orbit. The emergence of new publications, discontinuance of old titles, merger of one with another or several, the banning of publications for export, changes in the issuing authority or responsible

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editorship, etc., etc., are constantly facing the intelligence community. During 1953, at least twenty USSR publications have followed one of the above patterns. This information must be reported, collected, and disseminated to all interested agencies. Such information will help to eliminate numerous calls, inquiries and requests for publications which no longer exist and/or are unavailable through overt channels. It will also serve to indicate the appearance of additional new titles of potential value.

Daily contact with researchers indicates this ever-growing need for what might be termed a central register of foreign language serial publications and monographs. The Monthly List of Russian Accessions and the East European Accessions List, issued by the Library of Congress, are important contributions to this demand. They are, of necessity, academic rather than selective or pinpointed to intelligence needs. No such aids exist for Near or Far Eastern publications, which are of paramount importance to intelligence. It is believed that sufficient data is now available in Washington to provide part of this lack, provided centralized recording can be initiated and maintained.

Any serious reporting must be in terms of logging rather than listing, i.e., it must show where and how received, not merely what. It is suggested that the following be considered minimum essential reporting elements:

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1. Title (transliteration and translation)
2. Place of Publication
3. Publisher or Issuing Agency
4. Subjects normally covered
5. Agencies receiving current numbers
6. Method of acquisition (subscription, exchange, gratis)
7. Bibliographies, indexes, abstract journals "servicing" the title

If carried on seriously and coöperatively, such a procedure can effectively aid the procurement phase in fulfilling such queries as:

1. Is there such a title...who or what issues it?
2. What titles are available on the subject of?
3. Can you give the publications available in the country of.....?
4. Which are being indexed and/or abstracted? By whom? Where?

IV. Conclusions

- A. "Orders", i.e. requirements, for foreign language publications should be coordinated centrally to reduce unnecessary duplication of publication procurement.
- B. Requirements for procurement should follow logically upon a knowledge of what is needed for intelligence purposes, i.e., an exchange of agency holdings will reveal gaps and permit selective acquisition.

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- C. Centralized reporting will substantially help to offset the dearth of national bibliographies and give timely information.
- D. Standardization of bibliographic reporting will reduce the perpetuation of bibliographic error and resulting confusion.
- E. A ~~central register~~ of foreign language documentation should result, wherein cooperative components of the intelligence community may pool their resources for the benefit of all.

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